



News Release

ILLINOIS DISTRICT OFFICE

Release Date: June 18, 2008
Release Number: 08-03

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**SBA HONORS ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF
ILLINOIS SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS AND CHAMPIONS**
*Outstanding Small Businesses and Small Business Champions to be Honored at
the Illinois Small Business Week Awards, Training, and Procurement
Matchmaking Conference*

CHICAGO, IL – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) will recognize the state's premier small businesses, small business champions, and small business lenders at the 45th *Annual Illinois Small Business Week Awards Reception*, on Thursday, June 19, 2008 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel McCormick Place Regency Ballroom (2233 S. Martin Luther King Drive, Chicago, Illinois).

Each year, the SBA and its partners, SCORE and the Illinois DCEO, honor small businesses for contributions to Illinois' economy and society. This year's state winner for *Small Business Person of the Year* is George Burciaga of smarTECHS.net – a world-class IT firm offering technology life-cycle solutions to the marketplace. Nominated by Jesse Ruiz, Chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education and a Partner at the prestigious law firm of Drinker Biddle, Burciaga won over numerous entries throughout the state of Illinois.

“George Burciaga embodies qualities commonly found in successful entrepreneurs: a keen vision of what can be, a strong commitment to business and community, and a willingness to take risks necessary to move forward,” said Judith A. Roussel, Illinois District Director. **These are the qualities that led to Mr. Burciaga's selection as the Illinois Small Business Person of the Year as well as the Second Runner-Up for the National Small Business Person of the Year.”**

Recognized for its staying power and phenomenal growth, SmarTECHS.net originated as one-man (George Burciaga) operation working out of a two bedroom apartment a decade ago. Today, SmarTECHS.net has just completed the architectural plans for an 8500 square foot facility within the Prairie District Building that will house 13 of its highly-skilled employees whom are most noted for customizing IT products to suit customer needs throughout the nation.

In addition to the Small Business Person of the Year, Nancy Murphy, CEO of J&J Exhibitors Service, Inc. will receive the award for Family-Owned Small Business of the Year. Several small business champions, and small business lenders will receive awards because of their continued support of small businesses across Illinois. One of the Small Business Champion winners, Gerald C. Paulsen of Paulsen Productions, Inc. received a regional award. Another distinguished winner, Cheryle R. Jackson of the Chicago Urban League, garnered the prestigious Illinois

Choice Award for pursuing her vision of fostering economic empowerment through entrepreneurship.

This year's Illinois Small Business Week Award winners include the following:

2008 Financial Services Champion

Eva Aquino
Vice President/Illinois Regional Sales Manager
Banco Popular
Rosemont, IL

2008 Minority Champion

Gloria Castillo President
President
Chicago United, Inc.
Chicago, IL

2008 Jeffrey Butland Family-Owned Business Award

Nancy Murphy
Owner
J&J Exhibitors Service, Inc.
J&J Motor Service, Inc.
Chicago, IL

2008 Women in Business Champion

Ina Pinkney
Owner
Ina's Restaurant
Chicago, IL

2008 Veteran Small Business Champion

Gerald C. Paulsen
President & CEO
Paulsen Productions, Inc.
Elgin, IL

2008 Small Business Journalist

Owner-Editor-Publisher
Heartland Women Newspaper
Carbondale, IL

Illinois Choice Award

Cheryle R. Jackson
President & CEO
Chicago Urban League
Chicago, IL

Illinois National Lender of the Year

JP Morgan Chase Bank, N.A.

Illinois Regional Lender of the Year

National City Bank

Illinois State Lender of the Year

First American Bank

CDC 504 Lender of the Year

Small Business Growth Corporation

For tickets and registration information to the 45th Annual Illinois Small Business Week Awards, Training and Procurement Matchmaking Conference, visit www.sba.gov/il or contact our offices in Chicago (312) 353-4529 Springfield (217) 793-5020.

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